

Saltsburg, Town of
Indiana County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-⁶⁶⁴¹5438

HABS
PA,
32-SALT,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF SALTSBURG

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INTRODUCTION

Saltsburg, Pennsylvania, is located at the confluence of the Conemaugh and Kiskiminetas rivers in Conemaugh Township, Indiana County. The borough was named after the abundant salt wells in the river valley near the town, and mining it subsequently became a mainstay of local industry. Saltsburg's proximity to important water routes, as well as an abundance of other natural resources, prompted it to become an early commercial center between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. With the arrival of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and later the Pennsylvania Railroad, both of which passed through the center of Saltsburg, the borough achieved the rank of "one of the principal towns in the Conemaugh Valley."¹

Since a late-nineteenth-century economic burst founded on area coal-mining operations, the mid-twentieth century has been one of a comfortable, if static, economy. The local industrial base is aging, however, and the railroad closed in the relatively recent 1950s. The purpose of this study is to chronicle the development of Saltsburg--highlighted by nineteenth-century canal and railroad eras--with particular emphasis on the buildings and architectural heritage that remain intact.

LOCATION

Saltsburg is located in the southwest corner of Conemaugh Township, cradled on the eastern shore of a bend of the Kiskiminetas River where it meets the winding Loyalhanna River; the Kiskiminetas is formed by the confluence of the Conemaugh River to the east and the Loyalhanna, and it serves as the boundary between Indiana and Westmoreland counties (Figure 4.1).

This hilly, sparsely settled area is part of the fourth great coal basin west of the Allegheny Mountains, and thus it is rich in coal, iron ore, and limestone.² Today its valleys and inclines are interspersed with gas wells and strip mines. Saltsburg is situated thirty-one miles east of Pittsburgh and nineteen miles south of the county seat of Indiana; locally, New Alexandria is six miles to the south, and Tunnelton is four miles to the southeast. The borough is accessible only by state roads. Routes 981 and 286 converge at the bridge that crosses the Kiskiminetas River and enter Saltsburg at Washington Street, with the latter thoroughfare continuing northeastward.

¹ Samuel T. Wiley, Biographical and Historical Cyclopedia of Indiana County (Philadelphia: John M. Gresham and Co., 1891), 217.

² Wiley, 218.

6641

EARLY SETTLEMENT: 1760s - 1824

One of the first, although temporary, settlers in this portion of Indiana County was Robert Robinson Sr., who built a cabin on the Conemaugh River opposite the town of Coalport in 1766. He soon departed for a homestead property on Robinson's Run near the Armstrong County line.³

It was not until 1769, when a law was passed that invited large-scale settlement of the region, that applications were accepted from those willing to survey tracts of land for sale and occupancy. Most of these first arrivals were the Irish and Scotch who came from east of the Alleghenies. The first local-land applicant was William Gray who, on June 20, 1769, documented the parcel that became known as "Gray's Mount" (a portion of this tract later fell into the possession of the Robinson family of Saltsburg). That same year another application was submitted by brothers Hugh and Thomas Wilson, for a large area of land that encompassed both sides of the Conemaugh and Kiskiminetas rivers at the the mouth of the Loyalhanna. They eventually sold some of it to William Johnson, who would become one of the first to make his fortune in salt wells; Johnson, in turn, gave some of this land to his sister, the wife of Andrew Boggs.⁴

As the population increased, so did the need for established political boundaries. In 1807 Conemaugh Township was formed out of Armstrong Township, named after the river that forms its southern boundary.⁵ At the time, Saltsburg was located in what was called "Upper Westmoreland."⁶ In the first township election, held in spring 1807, Samuel Marshall was voted constable; Robert Fulton and John Matthews, supervisors; Robert Ewing and Thomas Reed, overseers of the poor; and John Marshall and Alexander Thompson, judges.⁷

Andrew Boggs, Johnson's brother-in-law, in 1816-17 laid out the settlement that grew into Saltsburg on a tract known as "the salt works."⁸ Boggs then advertised the new town in The American, in which he persuasively stated: "The local situation of Saltzburgh (sic) gives it many advantages, an abundant supply of timber and stone for building purposes, good water and plenty of it, and the town site is two miles from the Conemaugh Salt Works and in view of William Johnston's Mill." Boggs himself certainly found the region advantageous, as he owned

³ J. T. Stewart, Indiana County, Pennsylvania: Her People, Past and Present (Chicago: J.H. Beers and Co., 1913), 499.

⁴ Stewart, 252.

⁵ Stewart, 499.

⁶ John A. Bonya, "A Check List of Indiana County's Early Stone Buildings," Indiana County Heritage (Winter 1987-88), 29.

⁷ Stewart, 502-503.

⁸ Arms and White, 381; Stewart, 253.

three fairly profitable salt wells by 1829.⁹ By the first official land sale in 1817, it is estimated there were already approximately twelve to fifteen houses, and "in a short time a town began to rise from the woods."¹⁰

Commerce/Industry

Years earlier, between 1795 and 1798, a local woman discovered along the bank of the Conemaugh River near the future town, a natural resource that would ignite the area's first industry--salt water. Legend says she used it in a palatable mush, and as salt was utilized in large quantities as a food preservative, seasoning, and as a tanning ingredient, it was an expensive commodity. And vast supplies of it existed in the low lands along the Conemaugh River.

The War of 1812 precipitated a dramatic rise in the price of salt when the British blocked the usual salt-shipping route from New York via Lake Erie to Pittsburgh and points west.¹¹ This, coupled with its apparent abundance in the area, prompted Johnston, who hailed from Franklin County, to purchase land from the Wilson brothers. He and a partner invested \$3,000 in start-up costs to bore a well; the latter deserted the venture only ten days before it came to fruition, and Johnston later sold one-third of his interest for \$12,000.¹² His success was repeated by other entrepreneurs, and "very soon the hitherto silent and solitary banks of this river were all bustle, life and enterprise."¹³ Enthusiasm generated by the "salt craze," comparable to that of discovering oil, quickly attracted settlers, entrepreneurs, and capital from the East to the burgeoning region near Saltsburg called the Great Conemaugh Salt Works (later White's Station stop of the Pennsylvania Railroad).¹⁴

The presence of salt was indicated by slightly brackish water oozing out of the rocks; these "salt licks" frequently attracted animals, and therefore hunters. Although easy to locate, early production of salt was time-consuming and expensive to initiate. Holes were bored into the ground using a treadle, the poles connected with open mortise and tongue, and pumping was at first the work of horses. The salt itself was manufactured by boiling salt water in large kettles, the fires fueled with local timber. As prices fluctuated between \$5 and \$1 a bushel--eventually to be fixed at \$2 each--extraction technology improved. Long, deep, shallow iron pans replaced the kettles, coal replaced wood as fuel, and the steam engine was introduced to facilitate boring and pumping--all equipment and ingredients that had to be hauled by wagon

⁹ Clarence D. Stephenson, Indiana County 175th Anniversary History (Indiana: A.G. Halldin Publishing Co., 1978), 78; hereafter cited as 175th.

¹⁰ Arms and White, 203, 382.

¹¹ "1798 Salt Strike led to Birth of Saltsburg," Indiana Evening Gazette (16 April, 1963); Dr. Ernest Coleman, "Western Division Canal Boomed Salt Sales," Canal Currents (Summer 1971), n.p.

¹² Stephenson, 175th, 183.

¹³ Stewart, 502.

¹⁴ Stewart, 502, 253; Arms and White, 381.

641

from Pittsburgh and ferried across the river on keelboats.¹⁵

Soon, however, the market for salt generated enough revenue to justify the acquisition of more efficient machinery and appliances.¹⁶ Miners and other laborers arrived who were willing to work the sites, as did coopers ready to produce the barrels used to ship the salt south to New Orleans. The excavations quickly proved detrimental to the environment of the Kiskiminetas Valley, however, for according to a report in the American Journal of Science (1827), "Black bituminous smoke rises in clouds over the hills or draws through the dusky valley."¹⁷

Despite the primitive means of access to Saltsburg, both overland and water, the small cluster of houses and occasional merchants gradually began to resemble a settlement. In 1820 John Williams opened the first tavern in Saltsburg; but discouraged by poor early business, he departed and did not return until after the canal was constructed.¹⁸ One of the earliest gristmills was erected on the Conemaugh River across from Saltsburg, to which settlers within a five- to ten-mile radius packed their grain for processing. Later, an oil mill and still house were erected there; all the mills were powered with overhead wheels equipped with buckets.

Transportation

The rivers at Saltsburg provided the simplest and most expedient means of transportation, compared with hauling wagons along narrow trails, followed by down-river shipping to ports in New Orleans.¹⁹ The first ferry to operate in the vicinity of Saltsburg was on the Kiskiminetas near the junction of the Conemaugh River and Middle Creek. The first proprietor is unaccounted for, but it is known that Andrew Armstrong, a black man, ran a passenger ferry about 1816-17, with fares of 6 cents a person, 10 cents a horse, and 25 cents per horse and wagon.²⁰ The first bridge in the area, erected by Jacob Weister about 1820, spanned 100 feet across the Loyalhanna River.

With crude roads in place, the postal service was not far behind. Mail was delivered for the first time on October 2, 1804, via Armaugh, Beulah, and Conemaugh to Saltsburg; deliveries were made twice a month.²¹

¹⁵ Stewart, 502.

¹⁶ Wiley, 251.

¹⁷ Coleman, 5-6.

¹⁸ Arms and White, 382.

¹⁹ Stewart, 499.

²⁰ Stewart, 507.

²¹ Stephenson, 175th, 165.

W41

Community

As in most embryonic settlements, the foundations for community development such as formalized religious sects were scarce or limited; education and recreational opportunities were considered amenities if they existed at all. At the first sale of land, one lot was deeded to the Presbyterian church, then the only religious group in Saltsburg. Worshippers existed without much official organization in 1817, when they had to ask a neighboring Presbytery for supplies as well as "application for preaching at the salt works." It was not until 1824 that Reverend Thomas Davis arrived and the formal congregation of the Saltsburg Presbyterian Church was formed.²²

Saltsburg's first burial ground, adjacent to the first Presbyterian meeting house--a \$600 stone church slowly but surely erected between 1820 and 1831--was located near the east edge of the town. This half-acre was sufficient until after mid-century, when it was supplanted by the formal Edgewood Cemetery. The stone church served residents until it burned shortly after being completed.²³

The first school to serve Indiana County was only about one-half mile from the Kiskiminetas River in Conemaugh Township. It is believed to have functioned from about 1777 until at least 1785, in a dwelling owned by Robert Robinson. Students gathered for three hours in the evening, under the tutelage of James McDowell.²⁴ Informal efforts toward education, with classes held in private homes, would continue for several decades.

CANAL ERA: 1826 - 1864

The first leg of the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Canal was legislated on February 26, 1826, paralleling the Conemaugh and Kiskiminetas rivers; its operation included sixty locks (excluding four at each end), sixteen aqueducts, 152 bridges, ten river dams, sixty-four culverts, thirty-nine waste weirs, and two tunnels. Between Johnstown and Blairsville the fall in height was about 8 feet per mile, and from the latter to Pittsburgh was about 3 feet per mile. Saltsburg contained one lock, No. 8, located at the end of Salt Street where it met the river; a second nearby lock, No. 9, was about one mile due east of town (Figure 4.2).

Although the Main Line Canal was authorized in February 1826, construction did not commence until September of that year because of disputes over the route, primarily at the Allegheny River terminus in Pittsburgh. Ultimately, work followed the same pattern as the Juniata Division, the eastern one-third of the canal. The locks measured 90 feet long and 15 feet wide, with the prism measuring 40 feet at the top-water line, 28-feet at the bottom, and 4 feet deep. Here, however, the locks were built of cut stone laid in mortar, as compared with the rubble-stone and wood locks of the Juniata section. "The locks on this line have cast-iron

²² Stewart, 252-53.

²³ Stewart, 252-53, 508.

²⁴ Stewart, 500.

paddle gates, eight to each lock. The time of filling a lock or of discharging the water, where the lift is 8 feet, is about one minute and a half, and a boat can easily pass through in either direction, in three minutes."²⁵

The Pittsburgh terminus of the canal opened in spring 1829, but traffic through Saltsburg was stalled until summertime because of construction on the Conemaugh tunnel and aquaduct. The first two packets through lock No. 8 were the Pioneer and Pennsylvania, part of David Leech's line; this company was ultimately one of the last boat lines in service, until 1855.²⁶

Wheelwright and chairmaker Samuel Shryock Jamison (1797-1877) was a resident of Indiana, Pennsylvania, from 1818 until 1826, when he "obtained a contract . . . for the construction of a section of the Pennsylvania Canal"; three years later he was named supervisor of the entire Western Division. Lock No. 8 and its boat basin, constructed in 1828-29, are believed to have been the responsibility of two local men, Jacob Drum and John Gamble, about whom little is known for certain.²⁷

In 1830 upon overall completion, the Western Division cost \$2.9 million to build, nearly twice the original estimate of \$1.5 million.²⁸

Where the canal passed through Saltsburg, it caused little disruption in the street pattern aside from the addition of a number of canal bridges. It did, however, attract a cluster of warehouses and businesses near the channel, as well as along the lock and canal basin at the north edge of town. As navigation and trade was initiated on the canal, real estate adjacent to it became increasingly valuable. Besides the canal proper, the main line also furnished a market for subsidiary ventures: inns and hotels, boat-making and repair, packet-fleet operation, and land speculation.

Each lock required round-the-clock attention by a lockkeeper who lived nearby. Information exists for two (and perhaps the only) keepers of Saltsburg's lock No. 8. The first was James Mears, who held the position from 1844-46. He was followed by Hugh Kelly, who tended the lock from 1847 until the close of the canal in 1863-64. Kelly was also a grocer from mid-century on, and his store was next to the now-lost residence.²⁹

²⁵ Robert McCullough and Walter Leuba, The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal (York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1973), 52.

²⁶ George Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," Canal Currents (Spring 1979), 13; McCullough, 164.

²⁷ Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," 12.

²⁸ Peter A. Wallner, "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System, 1825-1857," Ph.D. diss. (Pennsylvania State University, 1973), 78.

²⁹ George Johnson, "Saltsburg Canal People," Canal Currents (Spring 1981), 12-13.

Commerce/Industry

The salt industry continued to flourish, and by 1826 an estimated thirty-five salt works were operating along the Conemaugh and Kiskiminetas rivers. In a few short years salt production climbed from 20,000 barrels annually to 75,000 barrels in 1825 (Figure 4.3). All the wells were directly on the line of the canal.³⁰

With the Pennsylvania Canal having become the most important influence on Saltsburg after the mid-1820s, one of the earliest associated industries became canal-boat building and service, to the extent that "for several years after completion of the canal, and the opening up of navigation through the main line from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, no business of any importance marked the history of Saltsburg, save the boat building industry."³¹ Founded in 1835-36 by Robert Young, Butler Meyers, and Jacob Newhouse, the first such enterprise attracted a number of craftsmen to town.³² Newhouse lived in a duplex at 803 Water St. (HABS No. PA-5429) for the decade starting in 1848, which was near his boatyard at the foot of Market Street. This two-story, six-bay frame dwelling, ca. 1833-40, is notable as a "double house," constructed to host two families, although it was only used as such for a short time. "Some of the finest and most symmetrical heavy-freight boats on the canal" were constructed at Newhouse's yard, claimed one early historian; the firm's prosperity lasted until 1863-64 when the canal's demise was imminent.³³

Another vital canal-related business in Saltsburg was owned by John M. Marshall, who operated a passenger-packet service between Blairsville and Pittsburgh on the main line. He also conducted an overland passenger service between the towns of Indiana and Saltsburg, scheduled to connect with canal-boat service in the latter.³⁴ To complement his transportation line, Marshall opened one of the first hotels in the borough on Washington Street, the Marshall House Hotel, which outlasted his other ventures.³⁵

Catering to passenger travel became a major industrial force along the canal. As settlers moved westward at a steady pace, inns and eating houses came into great demand. One early innkeeper was John Earhart, who previously wagoned on the Old Frankstown Road. His first hotel was later occupied by the Saltsburg Bank. The Earhart House, his second hotel, was a prominent landmark on the corner of Salt and Point streets for many years.³⁶ This building was apparently sold to canal boatman Joseph Anderson around 1850, whereupon it became known

³⁰ Coleman, n.p.

³¹ Arms and White, 382.

³² George Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," 31.

³³ Arms and White, 382.

³⁴ Clarence D. Stephenson, Pennsylvania Canal: Indiana and Westmoreland Counties (Marion Center: Author, 1961), p. 14.

³⁵ George Johnson, Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal (1984), 115.

³⁶ Arms and White, 390.

as the Anderson House, and still later as the Central Hotel.³⁷ After Earhart's death, his three daughters (Mary Ann, Kate, and Lavinia) operated a hotel on the corner of Salt Street and Ash Alley for many years.³⁸

Passenger receipts were secondary to the canal revenue derived from shipping raw materials necessary for industry. Salt, coal, iron, and agricultural products were among the many resources explored and exploited when economical freight shipping became possible. The salt industry continued to flourish despite flooding in 1832 that destroyed several saltworks along the Conemaugh and Kiskiminetas rivers.³⁹ Saltsburg soon became an "... important point on the canal as well as being the center of the salt trade of the county, which in 1842 amounted to 75,000 bushels of that article."⁴⁰ Large grain and flour businesses were established that began to tap the agricultural resources. "During a period dating from about 1840, up to the sale of the Main Line Canal," according to one historian, "a large grain commission business was conducted at the place, and commodious warehouse facilities attracted business from a large area of territory (sic)."⁴¹ One old grain warehouse, near Ash Alley on the old canal bed, survived as a grain warehouse until after the turn of the century.

One of the early gristmills and warehouse facilities for grain processing was owned by Reverend Francis Laird, a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian who settled in Saltsburg in 1845. At that time he went into a partnership with canal boatman Major J.C. McQuaide and formed Laird and McQuaide. Reverend Laird apparently became the sole proprietor of the mill between 1849 and 1885.⁴² In 1849 Laird also purchased property at 222 Point St. (HABS No. PA-5421), while McQuaide lived nearer the canal and business community, at 803 Water St.⁴³

The Conemaugh River Valley's wealth of iron resources prompted Andrew Steele to construct a foundry in 1850. Two years later he sold the works to Saltsburg residents Rodgers and Lawson.⁴⁴ Little is known about the foundry, but in 1851 it remained a small operation employing only two laborers. It was not until 1853, when Valentine Blank joined the business, that it was expanded with an eight-horsepower engine and three laborers to produce stoves, plows, grates, threshing machines, castings, and more for markets throughout Indiana,

³⁷ Johnson, Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal, 112.

³⁸ Arms and White, 390.

³⁹ Stephenson, 175th, 329.

⁴⁰ Wiley, 218.

⁴¹ Arms and White, 382.

⁴² Johnson, Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal, 115; Arms and White, 388; Wiley, 228.

⁴³ Deed March 14, 1871; deed February 6, 1850, Volume 16, Page 387.

⁴⁴ Stephenson, 175th, 522.

Westmoreland, and Armstrong counties.⁴⁵ Rodgers apparently lived at 103 Point St., close to the foundry that remained active for many years, although it appears to have changed hands prior to 1903 when it was called the Cooper Bros. Foundry and Machine Shop; the buildings were removed by 1927.⁴⁶ Saltsburg attracted craftsmen as well as merchants, because of its role as a regional canal port and commercial center. In 1832, for instance, chairmaker and painter Johnston S. Robinson came to Saltsburg, and by 1871 had opened a shop in his home at 425 Salt St. (HABS No. PA-5427).⁴⁷

Robinson opened a druggist establishment in 1853, and upon his death in 1888, his son David carried on; the latter was also affiliated with some of the local coal companies, and helped establish the Saltsburg Bank.⁴⁸

Samuel S. Moore opened the first tin and stove business in the borough in 1846 and he was still in business in 1880. About 1871 he erected a building at 222 Point St. (HABS No. PA-5421) that contained both his shop, in a formal glass storefront with its own entrance, and residence, confined to the second floor and accessed by a separate doorway. Notably, the overall character of the two-story, gable-front, frame building is residential rather than commercial. His son, William Moore (b. 1810), settled in Saltsburg "when a young man," and he, too, established himself in the tinning trade as "the principle partner in one of the largest and most successful business houses in Saltsburg."⁴⁹ The men lived next to each other; the father at 230 Point St., the son at 232 Point St., a typical gable-front frame building erected ca. 1828-49 (HABS No. PA-5416).

James Daugherty came to the borough as a carpenter's apprentice, although he went on to accomplish himself as a cooper, carpenter, and canal workman. He eventually established an eating house and hotel to take advantage of the canal traffic that flowed through town.⁵⁰ About 1871 Daugherty rented one-half of the house at 803 Water St. near the canal.⁵¹

Another well-known Saltsburg industry was carriage manufacturing, as was the first such 1848 establishment of Daniel Walter. The following year the group Row, Clark and Keister purchased stock in the shop, followed in 1850 with acquisition of the lots and buildings.⁵² In 1854 Keister retired, and three years later Rowe sold his investment in the company, leaving

⁴⁵ Arms and White, 384; Stephenson, 175th, 523; Stewart, 510.

⁴⁶ Deed March 26, 1859, Volume 24, Page 481, Indiana County Court House; Sanborn Maps, 1903, 1927.

⁴⁷ Arms and White, 389; F.W. Beers, Atlas of Indiana County, Pennsylvania (NY, 1871-80).

⁴⁸ Arms and White, 389; Stewart, 1046.

⁴⁹ Arms and White, 382, 393; Stewart, 642.

⁵⁰ Stephenson, 175th, vol. 4, 445; Johnson, Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal, 113.

⁵¹ Beers.

⁵² Arms and White, 396.

Hail Clark sole proprietor of the growing business.⁵³ At 13 Clark had worked as a muletender on the canal, and within six months he settled in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and turned to the trade of carriage and barness-making. Clark moved to Saltsburg in 1849, where he soon after earned the reputation as a skilled mechanic.⁵⁴ The carriage trade attracted many proficient craftsmen and their families to the borough. Between 1867 and 1883 Clark employed twenty men to build and repair carriages, wagons, and buggies, as well as related tasks such as trimming, painting, woodworking, and blacksmithing. In 1873 Clark attempted to expand the enterprise--which produced 200 buggies annually, some shipped to Pittsburgh--by constructing repositories in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Butler County. But by 1878 business had fallen off sufficiently to reduce the staff to six men, and abandon both the latter outlets.⁵⁵ In its prime, Clark's reputation was that of producing "only the highest class of work." He owned the "largest and most complete establishment of this kind in the county" and, expanded another source, it is "one of the largest and best-equipped carriage factories in the state."⁵⁶ By 1913 Clark's two sons, Murray and Ferdinand, were partners in the carriage business, whose buildings were thereafter abandoned and used for automobile storage by 1927.⁵⁷

In 1847 J.R. Reed constructed the borough's fourth tannery between the Conemaugh River and the canal, a move that highlights the growing importance of the canal as a shipping route. (The first two tanneries had been constructed behind the Earhart Hotel on Salt Street; the third tannery, owned by Thomas and John Robinson, was the first to be constructed on the bank of the canal.) Reed managed the business, which produced approximately 600 tanned hides per year in its thirty-two vats; it operated until sometime between 1880 and 1886.⁵⁸

Other early industries along the Conemaugh River include a sawmill and mill dam located at the foot of Market Street, owned by Clark and sawyer Joseph Andre. The mill contained a shop to manufacture posts for high poster beds.⁵⁹ It was followed by canal-era enterprises that included a woolen mill, gristmill, carding machine, and linseed-oil mill.⁶⁰ Little information is available about these ventures.

Merchant William McIlwain moved to Saltsburg in 1831 to join his brother Robert, "who

⁵³ Stephenson, 175th, 573.

⁵⁴ Arms and White, 396; Wiley, 223.

⁵⁵ Arms and White, 384.

⁵⁶ Wiley, 219, 220.

⁵⁷ Stewart, 510; Sanborn Map 1927.

⁵⁸ Stewart, 510; Arms and White, 384.

⁵⁹ Stewart, 505; Beers.

⁶⁰ Arms and White, 395; Beers.

had located there in the previous year, in the General Merchantile (sic) business.⁶¹ He operated a store at his residence, 214 Washington St. (HABS No. PA-5424), one of few remaining stone structures in the borough. Also one of the most traditional early Pennsylvania-style buildings extant, the simple, five-bay, two-story house is constructed of rubble-filled stone walls that narrow from hanked foundation to the gables. This building is nearly identical to the residence at 105 Point St. (HABS No. PA-5419), built ca. 1830; thus, these may be the two oldest structures still standing in Saltshurg. In 1831 McIlwain moved his business to another structure on Salt Street; he ultimately worked forty-four years as a merchant before retiring.⁶²

William Sterret became a merchant when he settled in Saltshurg in 1841, working under various firms such as Sterret, Robinson (J.M.) & Company, Sterret and Sandles (William), Sterret and McIlwain (William R.), W.J. Sterret, and in 1876 Sterret and Company; he later served as president of the Saltshurg Bank.⁶³

Saltsburg also became home to Dr. John McFarland, a graduate of Jefferson Medical College, who settled there in 1836--perhaps to be near his salt well.⁶⁴ In 1842 he built the modest two-story, four-bay house at 216 Washington St. (HABS No. PA-5425). McFarland served in state House of Representatives in the 1845-46 term, and later became one of the first directors of the Northern Pennsylvania Railroad. In a local capacity he was president of the county medical society for one term, and was a director of the Saltshurg Academy. In 1871 McFarland established a drug store "on the old stone house corner" at Washington Street, but five years later he moved the business to Salt Street where it remained until his death in 1889. Upon Dr. McFarland's death, his son John R. took over the firm, until 1905 when the store was purchased by an employee, E. E. Goodlin.⁶⁵

Transportation

As the temptation of interior natural resources and their traffic grew more appealing, local transportation routes were improved. A second ferry known to have served Saltsburg was established in 1836 by James Dougherty, who also operated a hotel on the riverbank just above the toll bridge.

The first substantial (toll) bridge across the Kiskiminetas River was undertaken by the Saltshurg Bridge Company, which completed it in 1842-43 at a cost of \$10,000. Absalon Woodward was the contractor, Daniel McKean the master carpenter, and John Stoops the master mason for the slender, 400-foot covered wooden span. Timber for the bridge was rafted in by river from Clarion and Jefferson counties, while the stone was quarried from nearby the

⁶¹ Arms and White, 387.

⁶² Bill Wolford, ed., 1987 Canal Days Special Covered Bridge Edition (Historic Saltsburg, 1987), 21-22.

⁶³ Arms and White, 390.

⁶⁴ William H. Egle, An Illustrated History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: Dewitt C. Goodrich and Co., 1876), 792.

⁶⁵ Arms and White, 389; Stephenson, 175th, vol. 4, 365; Stewart, 509.

canal.⁶⁶ The structure remained poised atop three stone piers until 1922 when it burned, only to be replaced a year later by an iron bridge (that subsequently was destroyed by flood waters in 1936).⁶⁷

In an attempt to further open up western Pennsylvania, the state government constructed a road between the county seat of Indiana and Saltsburg in 1826. Unfortunately these early routes were often little better than widened trails, with surface conditions that varied with the seasons and maintenance. Many of the company-owned turnpikes were never financially successful, and thus their road surfaces were allowed to deteriorate. Nevertheless, the postal service improved markedly with the coming of the canal, for the stage that ran between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh delivered mail to Saltsburg thrice weekly in 1828, and every day by the following year.

Community

With canal construction under way and the noteworthy existing growth, the "Saltsburgh" post office was established in 1828; and the town retained that spelling until 1892 when the "h" was dropped.⁶⁸ In 1832 Saltsburg was composed of twenty dwellings, two stores, two taverns, and a Presbyterian Church; thus, by 1838 the town's size warranted incorporation as a borough, which occurred on April 16 of that year.⁶⁹ In 1840 the population of Saltsburg had risen to 335, and by mid-century the number of houses had reputedly doubled to forty.⁷⁰

As westward migration continued, a greater diversity of ethnic and religious groups arrived. In the meantime, worshippers did the best they could, as in 1828 when Father Gallitzen celebrated Roman Catholic mass for canal laborers inside the nearby canal tunnel.⁷¹ It was not until a few years after the arrival of builder John Martin in the early 1840s that a Catholic church was constructed.⁷² Martin's father had been politically active in Ireland and was forced to flee his country; but upon arriving in Quebec, Canada, he contracted cholera and was nursed back to health by the Catholic Sisters of Charity. As repayment for this debt on behalf of his father, the young Martin donated his construction services to erect St. Matthew's Church in 1847 (HABS No. PA-5436). The church, a modest Gothic Revival brick building three bays wide and four bays deep, remains at its original Cathedral Alley site, which had been

⁶⁶ Saltsburg Press (16 April, 1963).

⁶⁷ Stewart, 507; Craig Swauger, "Growing Up in Saltsburg," Indiana County Heritage (Spring 1979), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Mary Johnson, "Post Office Dates to 1828," in "1838-1888" (Supp.) Indiana Gazette (1988).

⁶⁹ Thomas F. Gordon, A Gazetteer of the State of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: T. Belknap, 1832), 403; Stewart, 796.

⁷⁰ Wiley, 221; Daniel I. Rupp, The Geographical Catechism of Pennsylvania and the Western States . . . (Harrisburg: John Winebrenner, 1836), 604.

⁷¹ Stephenson, 175th, 291.

⁷² Martin's arrival to Saltsburg varies according to the source: It was 1841 according to Arms and White, and 1843, Wiley, 218.

purchased by Reverend Michael O'Connor for \$1 from nearby resident Mathias Rombach.⁷³ The bricks were made at a nearby site, and the foundation stones were said to have been left over from the canal construction.⁷⁴ When a new Catholic church was erected in 1861, this structure was relegated to use as a storage facility.

Martin erected for himself a house at 502 High St. (HABS No. PA-5422) in 1853-54. Made of wood, ironically, the rectangular, two-story block features unique and lively ornamentation that includes crenellated cresting and exaggerated porch brackets.

Other churches constructed in this period include the frame Methodist Episcopal Church, dedicated in 1841, whose first pastor was Reverend Jeremiah Phillips.⁷⁵ Two years later it was joined by the brick Baptist Church, settled by the Reverend Thomas Wedell, and the brick Associate Presbyterian--now United Presbyterian--Church, organized by Reverend Hanse Lee (although its first instituted pastor, Oliver P. Katz, did not appear until 1861).⁷⁶

The Scotch-Irish Presbyterian settlers of Saltsburg were considered hardy and sober citizens who recognized the value of education. One early historian described them collectively as "a brave, determined, self-denying race, by no means deficient in education and love of learning. It is a notable fact that in spelling, penmanship, and accuracy of style and manner, the early records of the townships and county will compare favorably with those of more recent date."⁷⁷ While informal classes were held in private homes throughout much of the early nineteenth century, in 1834 the Free School Act paved the way for established (and autonomous) borough and county schools; and, by 1840, Conemaugh Township contained five schools boasting 337 pupils, more than any other township in Indiana County.⁷⁸ In 1851-52 the first formal high-school institution opened as the Saltsburg Academy, a two-story brick building atop a raised foundation story with white Greek Revival woodwork that occupies an elevated site at the corner of High and Point streets (HABS No. PA-5433). S.S. Jamison constructed the two-story, gable-front brick building; its \$3,300 cost financed by the sale of \$25 shares of stock. Incorporating members of the academy included Adam Robinson; merchant William Stewart; J.W. Robinson; Jamison the builder; W.W. Woodend, the Presbyterian minister who later served as principal; craftsman J.S. Robinson; and packet-service owner and local hotelier John Marshall. Seventy-five young pupils whose families paid tuition of \$6 to \$10 per five-month session attended opening classes in May 1852; girls were instructed on the second floor, boys on the first.⁷⁹

⁷³ Delia Delfavro, "John Martin was a Builder," in "1838-1988" (Supplement), Indiana Gazette (3 June, 1988).

⁷⁴ "1833-1988" (Supplement), Indiana Gazette (3 June, 1988).

⁷⁵ Stephenson, 175th, 292.

⁷⁶ Wiley, 218-19.

⁷⁷ Stewart, 794.

⁷⁸ Stephenson, 175th, 284; Stewart, 500.

⁷⁹ Stephenson, 14.

RAILROAD ERA: 1850s - 1954

For ten years the canal and railroad coexisted in Saltsburg (Figure 4.4). The Saltsburg Borough Council approved the right of way for construction of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks through the borough on June 3, 1854; the same year the state offered the canal for sale at a reduced price of \$10 million.⁸⁰ Shortly thereafter, Samuel Jamison and mason John Martin began to construct the railroad depot facing Point Street parallel to the site of the tracks (HABS No. PA-5437). The rectangular building, highlighted by a low-pitched roof and wide eaves, has been substantially altered over the years and is currently used as the borough office.⁸¹ Jamison rose from a canal contractor to a well-to-do and influential citizen. From 1854 to 1856 he served in the Pennsylvania State Legislature, where he advocated the sale of minor state-owned canals, while retaining control of the debt-ridden main line.⁸² About the same time, he received a contracting position near Saltsburg with the railroad, but four years later the company had financial difficulties and all construction was halted; in May 1857 the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the canal.⁸³ Although Jamison had completed a portion of his contract, the company was unable to pay for the work, and he was forced to shoulder the financial responsibility. Selling his home in Saltsburg, he returned to Indiana, Pennsylvania, to construct wagons for the government, but discouraged by poor business, he moved to his daughter's home in Iowa. Jamison's son, Benton, purchased the old Saltsburg dwelling and gave it to his parents; the elder Jamison then returned to Saltsburg and spent the remainder of his life farming and completing a few contracting jobs.⁸⁴

The Western Division of the main line was the first closed by the new owner, but for ten years, until about 1864, the canal and railroad co-existed in Saltsburg, dually continuing to encourage settlement and general development of the region. The Portage Railroad section of the main line, which carried canal traffic over the Allegheny Mountains, was almost immediately closed, too, thus severing the connection between eastern and western divisions of canal.⁸⁵

On June 2, 1866, the town fathers approved the railroad's request to fill in the canal bed, which took several years to complete. In early 1872 Saltsburg's lock No. 8 was dismantled and \$200 to \$300 worth of stone from it was incorporated into the soldiers' monument being

⁸⁰ George Johnson, "Saltsburg Borough Council Minutes and the Pennsylvania Canal, 1850-66," Canal Currents (Autumn 1979), 6.

⁸¹ Canal Days (Historic Saltsburg Inc., 1984), n.p.

⁸² Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," 12.

⁸³ Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," 6.

⁸⁴ Stephson, 175th, vol. 4, 201.

⁸⁵ George Swetman, Pennsylvania Transportation, Pennsylvania Historical Studies No. 7 (Gettysburg: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1968), 57.

W41

erected in Edgewood Cemetery.⁸⁶

Commerce/Industry

In 1861 the struggling salt industry received a serious blow, one compounded by the loss of the canal to provide for economical freighting, when a Conemaugh River flood destroyed a number of saltworks near the borough. Due to competition from western states that could transport salt more cheaply via the Great Lakes, a number of these works were never rebuilt.⁸⁷ In 1882 the Pennsylvania Railroad moved its tracks from their route between Salt and High streets to the site of the old canal bed near the river; a new station was constructed on Washington Street two years later. The old station on Point Street served as a town hall for many years, then in the twentieth century as a bowling alley and borough offices.

Saltsburg was not permanently affected by the loss of the canal. According to one historian, "The abandonment of the canal and the decline of salt manufacturing retarded the growth of Saltsburg until 1887, when the opening of coal mines and the establishment of other industries gave a new lease of life to the town."⁸⁸ William Sterret, for instance, organized the Fairbanks Coal Company in 1866 to extract the valuable bituminous coal deposits that existed in the area.⁸⁹ By 1891 an important new industrial base for Saltsburg was under way, with the Fairbanks and the Foster Coal companies two of the most vital businesses in the town. Both were based within one and one-half miles of the borough near the rail line, along which a company-owned fleet of cars facilitated the shipment of coal to a wide range of markets that included Canada. The majority of the 325 miners employed in Saltsburg were American, many of whom owned their own homes. Although wages were not necessarily high, no strikes were recorded during the first twenty-five years of operation. But due to the absence of company stores, "they [the miners] come to Saltsburg for their supplies, and their trade keeps business lively."⁹⁰

As the complexity of coal-mining technology increased, so did the need for professional civil engineers. Robert H. Wilson, who settled in the borough in 1888, proved to be a highly qualified engineer sought after throughout western Pennsylvania. A specialist in the design of water and sewerage systems, and coal mines throughout the bituminous-coal region, Wilson formed a partnership with Albert Smith.⁹¹ The two men served as consulting geologists and engineers, with offices in Saltsburg and Washington, Pennsylvania.⁹² The waterworks constructed in Saltsburg between 1891 and 1897 may have been designed by this team. Even as

⁸⁶ Johnson, "Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal," 7.

⁸⁷ Stephenson, 175th, 523-24.

⁸⁸ Wiley, 218.

⁸⁹ Gloria Berringer, ed., 1838-1988: Canal Days Sesquicentennial (Historic Saltsburg, 1988), 37.

⁹⁰ Wiley, 219.

⁹¹ Stewart, 618.

⁹² Wiley, 232.

the industrial base shifted from salt to coal, and the railroad superseded canal transportation, an array of traditional merchants continued to flourish in Saltsburg. In 1859 Thomas B. Patton established the second wagon-making business, in a shop that had been constructed as a stable by S.S. Jamison. Originally located near the canal basin, it was relocated to the old canal bed near the new passenger depot on Washington Street between 1871 and 1880.⁹³

In 1870 butcher William Grabenstein settled in Saltsburg and founded an elaborate pork-packing plant about one-quarter mile from town along the Conemaugh River. He constructed two buildings, in 1873 and 1876, respectively. In 1878 Grabenstein packed 1,200 hogs, using steam power to render lard and cut sausages; the meat, including his "Saltsburg Bologna" was stored in an ice house.⁹⁴

James Hudson purchased property in the borough in 1877, on which he constructed a steam-powered planing mill. He apparently ran "a regular building establishment," which may have been the lumber company near the canal on Market Street; this business closed in 1886 after it was acquired by George B. Davis.

Davis opened a planing mill and lumberyard in 1885 on the site of the Butler Meyers canal boatyard adjacent to the railroad tracks. At 16 Davis became a carpenter's apprentice, after which he founded a lumber business in Hills Station, Pennsylvania, though he moved to Saltsburg the following year.⁹⁵ In 1887 Wilson C. Davis, his brother George, and O.R. Lake organized Davis Brothers and Company, a manufactory of lumber, doors, sash, moldings, and especially stairwork. Its undoubtedly brisk business, thanks to the building boom, is confirmed by one historian: "This firm has a high reputation for high-class work, and the business has shown a continuous increase from the very beginning, occupying a leading place among the important industries of the locality." By 1913 George moved to Idaho, while Wilson remained to manage the business, though by 1903 the structures were merely used for storage, and shortly thereafter were sold to the Daugherty family.⁹⁶

In 1881 Martin V. Patterson, an experienced contractor, lumberman, and oil-well driller, settled in Saltsburg and opened a flour mill.⁹⁷ Four years later he joined John Hershey in a partnership and purchased the Saltsburg flour mill, which may have been the old Laird and McQuaid establishment. This mill was nearly destroyed in the great flood of 1889 that devastated Johnstown, but it was remodeled the following year to include a steam and roller process.⁹⁸ Production apparently resumed in 1891, prompting one observer to claim "they have

⁹³ Wiley, 20; Beers.

⁹⁴ Clarence D. Stephenson, "A Tribute," in 1838-1988 Sesquicentennial, 12; Arms and White, 389.

⁹⁵ Stewart, 506; Wiley, 224.

⁹⁶ Stewart, 682; Sanborn Maps 1903, 1909, 1927.

⁹⁷ Wiley, 228.

⁹⁸ Stewart, 802.

a large trade and manufacture high and fancy grades of roller flour, which they export to some extent beyond supplying the home demand for the same."⁹⁹ By 1891 the mill was producing an estimated 1,050 barrels of flour daily, for which it was considered a "credit to the town."¹⁰⁰ Martin Patterson admitted his son, Harry, into the business in 1903, yet the elder Patterson retained much of the control in the company until his death sixteen years later.¹⁰¹ The Patterson Milling Company was formed in 1911 after a fire destroyed the 20-year-old mill. A large, much-touted new mill with a 125-barrel a day capacity was erected on Point Street near the train tracks around 1913.¹⁰² The building was equipped ". . . with the most approved up-to-date machinery, and operated throughout by electricity. It will be the model establishment of its kind in the region."¹⁰³ The building is still standing with the machinery intact.

Businessman James P. Watson, principal stockholder and treasurer of the Saltsburg Glass Company, settled in Saltsburg in 1889.¹⁰⁴ "This company purchased the old Saltsburg Glass Company, and with characteristic energy for which they are now noted, immediately remodeled, enlarged, and improved the works. They now manufacture fine prescription ware and bottles of all kinds." A year later output reached about 100 bottles a day. The firm employed eighty men and boys in the vicinity of Saltsburg, of whom twenty-one were skilled glass blowers.¹⁰⁵ The company apparently changed its name several times; for instance, in 1897 it was the Saltsburg Bottle Works Company, and in 1903 the Saltsburg Flint Bottle Company. It closed around 1907 and soon after disappeared from fire insurance maps. By 1924 another "bottling plant" appears on Water Street, however.¹⁰⁶

Historic photographs of Saltsburg indicate that commercial structures changed physically from their mid-century appearance. In the early settlement and canal-era, industries were housed in the borough's most formidable buildings. Hail Clark's carriage works, the Davis Brothers' lumber concern, and mills and grain warehouses, for instance--each occupied large buildings of two stories or more. In contrast, stores and similar commercial buildings were based in residential-scale buildings. It is not until the railroad era that commercial buildings were designed to advertise their function. These late Victorian structures featured first-floor display windows in which merchandise was arranged, while upper stories were lit and ventilated through regular bays of tall sash; intricate woodwork demarked facades; and large signs and colorful awnings were designed to catch the eye of passersby. Merchants added needed storage

⁹⁹ Wiley, 228.

¹⁰⁰ Wiley, 220.

¹⁰¹ Stewart, 802.

¹⁰² Stewart, 510.

¹⁰³ Stewart, 803.

¹⁰⁴ Stewart, 656.

¹⁰⁵ Wiley, 231, 220.

¹⁰⁶ Saltsburg Press (18 April, 1963), sec. 2, p. 7; Sanborn Maps.

space within the structure to house the surplus goods of a thriving business. These businesses were primarily clustered along Salt and Point streets, interspersed with older businesses and dwellings. The railroad era marked a period of architectural and spatial changes in the commercial sector of the town.

Commercial activity flourished as the number of miners and their families increased, and a number of prominent merchants enlarged established businesses in response to the favorable economic climate. The career of one of Saltsburg's most important businessmen began in 1875 when J.C. Moore became a partner in his father's stove and tin business. William Moore and Son, located on Salt Street, retained a selection of tin, copper, and sheet-iron ware, stoves, grates, and house furnishings, and enlarged the stock to include a selection of hardware, paints, oils, and glass. The firm made "a specialty of tin, iron, slate, and felt roofing and have a remunerative trade that extends beyond Saltsburg and the limits of the county," attested one historian.¹⁰⁷ After his father's death in 1891, the younger Moore renamed the business the J.C. Moore Cash Hardware Store, and again sixteen years later, to J.C. Moore Supply Company.¹⁰⁸ The structure was among a number of Saltsburg buildings that burned in 1981.

In 1875 the Saltsburg Press reported that a new dry-goods shop was opening in town. H.J. and S.S. Porster were local contractors, carpenters, house and sign painters, and dealers in such products as lumber, sash, doors, hardware, and paints. Their business was based in two large, three-story buildings and employed several workmen:

The most notable building in progress now is that on Point Street between Canal and Salt Streets, where Messrs. H. & S. Porster have the contract for putting up a frame building two stories high, 36' front by 76' in depth, for the firm of Messrs. H. & S. Porster. The first story will be occupied by the above firm as a dry goods, hardware, provision and grocery store, and as this firm is connected with the Fairbanks Coal Works, employing over 100 laborers, and they furnish these laborers and their families with the various articles kept in their store, it would seem that they require larger accommodations than those they have at present. The second story front will be used for storage.¹⁰⁹

Local merchant William McIlwain (probably the son of an earlier merchant of that name) owned a large store along the canal at 222 Point St. by 1871 (HABS No. PA-5432). He had purchased the lot and warehouse across the alley in 1868, and apparently rented the property to G. Wilson in 1871.¹¹⁰ Tax records around 1880 indicate that McIlwain may have removed the warehouse and constructed a large Victorian-style store with decorative woodwork and an elaborate storefront with full-height windows through which the interior mezzanine could be viewed. The second floor was called Armory Hall, and served as the meeting place of

¹⁰⁷ Wiley, 227.

¹⁰⁸ Stewart, 509.

¹⁰⁹ Saltsburg Press (18 April, 1963), 5.

¹¹⁰ Deed June 11, 1868, Volume B34, Page 489, Indiana County Courthouse; Beers.

Company "B," Tenth Regiment National Guard. This structure is in very good condition today.

As the borough became more affluent it soon was apparent that a financial institution was needed. William Sterret had organized a bank in his own home as early as 1866, to handle money for the miners in the Fairbanks Coal Company.¹¹¹ But banking needs were sufficient by 1871 to warrant establishing the Saltsburg Bank. At first housed in a wing of saddler and canal-boat captain Robert J. Taylor's home at 211 Point St. (HABS No. PA-5420), four years later the First National Bank of Saltsburg moved into a small but eclectic new building across the road at 214 Point St. (HABS No. PA-5431). Both edifices are extant. The Saltsburg Press described the latter building:

First in importance and architectural taste, is the neat and attractive structure being erected by the contractor, Mr. James Hudson, for the Saltsburg Bank. It adjoins the building of Messrs. S & R, is built of brick, two stories, having an ornamental iron front. It is rapidly progressing toward completion, and will be ready for occupancy, by the banking institution, by the first of October.¹¹²

A banquet celebrating its opening was held at the Earhart Hotel, though records indicate that the bank didn't own the lot until three years after the building was constructed. An addition was made to the rear of the building between 1886 and the year it failed, 1890.¹¹³ Today the building remains largely intact.

The borough's second bank, Farmer's and Merchant's Bank of Saltsburg, was established in 1875. This institution was housed in the Central Hotel on the corner of Point and Salt streets, where the facade woodwork was completed by H. and S. Porster, and the painting on the door executed by I.S. Porster.¹¹⁴ In 1882 it was reorganized as the First National Bank, and the organization moved in 1893 from the Central Hotel location to the Point Street building that housed the recently failed Saltsburg Bank. This institution flourished and, in 1927, moved again to a new building erected on the site of the Central Hotel; in 1967 the bank's name was changed to the Savings and Trust Company of Pennsylvania.¹¹⁵

Community

Economic pursuits did not overshadow spiritual, mental, and physical maintenance of borough residents. In 1869 Reverend Andrew Getty, a canal boatman, teacher, and Universalist minister settled in Saltsburg. He and the fifteen-member Universalist congregation constructed

¹¹¹ Ann Palmer and Patricia Miller, "A History of Saltsburg's Banks," 1838-1988 Sesquicentennial, 36.

¹¹² Saltsburg Press (18 April, 1963), 5.

¹¹³ Palmer and Miller, 37, 39; Sanborn Maps 1886, 1891.

¹¹⁴ Saltsburg Press (18 April, 1963), reprint from "A Monster Safe," Saltsburg Press (24 November, 1875).

¹¹⁵ Stewart, 510; Palmer and Miller, 37.

a church on Market Street near his home in the following year.¹¹⁶ By 1903, however, the building was no longer being used as a church, and may have been occupied as a school. (Getty supplemented his income with a steam-flouring mill he constructed in 1879 "on the hill.")

The United Presbyterian congregation constructed a new \$3,000 church on High Street near the Saltsburg Academy in 1870 (HABS No. PA-5434). The "neatly furnished" new structure was a small, one-story, gable-front frame building with few modest decorative features. The building continued to be owned by the church until 1984, when it was purchased by the Williamson Club, which uses it as a masonic lodge.¹¹⁷

The long-established Presbyterian Church was forced to construct a new house of worship in 1874, one year after its small church on the north edge of town was evaluated as unsafe. During the yearlong construction, religious services were held in the nearby Saltsburg Academy building. The building, at the corner of Salt and Washington streets, cost \$27,765. The formal, Gothic-styled edifice was described at the time as ". . . one of the most substantial brick and stone structures in this part of the state. . . The windows are modern in style and filled with a good quality of stained glass, while the main window is large, of beautiful design and yet unpretentious. The spire is justly regarded as very beautiful."¹¹⁸

Early in the nineteenth century Lutheran families from eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Germany arrived and settled in Indiana County. A group from the Sons of Zebedee Evangelical Lutheran Church settled in Saltsburg and built a meeting house on Salt Street just north of Washington Street in 1878 (HABS No. PA-5435). This simple yet textural Carpenter Gothic-style church is brick, designed on a three-bay by five-bay rectangular plan with a center steeple, pointed-arch windows, and patterned slate roof.

After the turn of the century it became obvious that the small Presbyterian cemetery was inadequate. The Edgewood Cemetery Company was formed in 1868 to oversee the development of a ten-acre burial ground on the east edge of Saltsburg. J.E. Robinson and S.S. Porster laid it out along strict right angles with a system of streets, with the centerpoint marked by Soldier's Monument, a great 25-foot sandstone obelisk.¹¹⁹

Education in Saltsburg continued to grow as a priority throughout the nineteenth century. In 1869 the Presbyterian Church acquired the Saltsburg Academy, renovated and refurbished the building, and rededicated it as the Memorial Institute on April 3, 1871. As the turn of the twentieth century approached, the former academy building served as one of three public-school facilities in the county. From 1890 until 1912, when a large new school was constructed on Market Street between Poplar and Pine alleys, the old academy served as part of the public school system; thereafter it was used privately, at first as A.E. Ray's carpentry

¹¹⁶ Arms and White, 392.

¹¹⁷ Pennsylvania Historic Resources Inventory form.

¹¹⁸ Stewart, 253-55.

¹¹⁹ Stewart, 508.

shop.¹²⁰ Its cupola and some porch elements are missing today, but the building largely retains its form and integrity.

Another school got its start in 1879 when John Martin began to construct a hotel for what was intended to be a summer resort. Nine years later he sold the hotel to A.W. Wilson, a businessman from Indiana, Pennsylvania. In 1890 Wilson and his son, Harry, were partners in the Indiana Gas Company, which piped natural gas near Saltsburg. Wilson, of whom it was said, "from his boyhood was deeply impressed with an appreciation of the priceless value of education," utilized personal funds to procure the hotel and surrounding land, thus enabling another son, A.W. Wilson Jr., and R.W. Fair to open in 1889 what became the Kiskiminetas Spring School.¹²¹ Wilson Jr., a graduate of Princeton University, and his sister Ella, who graduated from Vassar College, joined the faculty.¹²² A year later the private boys school was expanded with the construction of a brick building to house a gym, chapel, classrooms, and dormitory space sufficient to house twenty-eight pupils; a total of eighty boys were enrolled and resided in both buildings.¹²³ W.H. McColl joined the partnership in 1902; in 1913 Fair retired, and a year later the school grew again, to include the estate of Captain Reese. The school, which now encompassed about 200 acres and another brick house, boasted twelve teachers and 130 students.¹²⁴ It remains a private boys' school today.

Early-twentieth-century maps of Saltsburg indicate three separate public school buildings. The old Saltsburg Academy building on High Street, a small structure on the corner of Market Street and Pine Alley that may have been the former Universalist Church, and a third facility on a lot between Poplar and Pine alleys. This last structure, erected prior to 1871, was a two-room schoolhouse with classrooms on the first and second floors. It was used as such until 1912 when a new brick structure--"modern in every particular"--was constructed on that lot.¹²⁵ It housed 458 pupils the year following its construction.¹²⁶ In general, the collective development of public and private schools in the area meant that "for many years Conemaugh Township stood in the first rank along educational lines."¹²⁷

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, the medical profession in Saltsburg consisted largely of individual practices in small, residential offices. In 1909, however, Indiana County native Dr. E. Bruce Earhart established the Saltsburg General Hospital in the sprawling former

¹²⁰ Stewart, 225, 253; Arms and White, 384.

¹²¹ Stewart, 510.

¹²² Stephenson, 175th, 475.

¹²³ Wiley, 220.

¹²⁴ Stewart, 511.

¹²⁵ Stewart, 226.

¹²⁶ Stewart, 509.

¹²⁷ Stewart, 500.

residence of merchant Mathias Romhach on the west edge of town (HABS No. PA-5430). Built ca. 1838-50 as a traditional five-bay, L-plan, additions after 1871 include four primary bays and a second ell (that transformed the building into a U-shaped plan) and two Italianate porches. As a medical facility, it:

was promptly recognized as an important acquisition of the town, being equipped with all the modern appliances for the treatment and care of the sick. It has accommodations for thirty-five patients, and has been a success from the beginning. This institution has given Dr. Earhart an opportunity to do justice to his surgical cases, in which he has been eminently successful, his reputation in that branch being particularly creditable.¹²⁸

The hospital may have closed in 1915 when Earhart died. Due to disinterest in the estate and its failure to sell at auction, the property was privately sold to Elvira E. Earhart, a relative.¹²⁹

There is scant evidence of community organizations in Saltshurg. The National Guard was organized in 1878 by Major R.J. Irwin, and became active the following year. Its headquarters was located on the second floor of William McIlwain's general store at 202 Point St. from at least the 1880s through 1909: "The 'Armory' of the company is arranged in modern style, with all the conveniences that are strictly necessary. There are sixty-two cases or wardrobes, in which each soldier places his clothes, arms and equipments."¹³⁰

CONCLUSION

When the railroad tracks through Saltshurg were abandoned about 1954, an important tradition that had lasted more than 100 years came to an end. The once-important route was reduced to a grassy strip atop the old canal bed and rail path. Since then, a large percentage of the town's historic building stock has been lost. Despite a modest but stable economy, the town is fortunate to retain a significant number of historic structures that are largely intact and that reflect the architectural and cultural heritage of Saltshurg.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Saltshurg represents a well-preserved southwestern Pennsylvania town, founded in the mid-nineteenth century and rapidly developed upon discovery of vast mineral salt resources, a commodity that contributed to the implementation of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal, from which the town then prospered. It is significant for its association with the heyday of the canal during mid-century, and its usurper, the railroad, as well as the early industry of salt extraction-

¹²⁸ Stewart, 635.

¹²⁹ Deed May 6, 1915, Volume 146, Page 202, Indiana County Courthouse.

¹³⁰ Arms and White, 386.

-and all related architectural resources. Saltsburg is fortunate to retain an array of buildings from the late 1820s through the 1880s--residential, commercial, civic, church--that reflect the town's historic vitality as a commercial center along the nation's first major inland east-west transportation route. For this reason the buildings and structures extant in Saltsburg should be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary and secondary resources, as well as public records, were used to document this Pennsylvania canal town. Several nineteenth-century publications offer contemporary depictions of life, such as J. Simpson Africa's History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania, Arms and White's 1745-1880: History of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, and the 1913 Indiana County, Pennsylvania by J.T. Stewart. These were augmented by many articles, periodicals and books published in recent years by local historical groups promoting an interest in canal heritage, such as Canal Currents, Indiana County Heritage, 1838-1988: Canal Days Sesquicentennial, and Hartslog Heritage. Publications devoted to chronicling the history of the canal itself are provided by Robert McCullough and Walter Leuba's The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and Peter Wallner's doctoral thesis, "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System." Public documents provided information on historical township and borough tax assessment, deeds and probate activities. Additional information was gleaned from historic maps and atlases, and forms produced as part of the Pennsylvania Historical Resources Survey.

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PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorotby Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Kristin Belz, University of Virginia. Large-format photography was by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-two reports on individual buildings in Saltsburg and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Alexandria (Huntingdon County) and an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989). This report was Chapter 4 of that publication.

This assessment of the architectural and historical significance of two towns located along the route of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal during the nineteenth century was completed during summer 1988. Dozens of modest commercial centers were historically located along the 395-mile waterway that linked Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but few can boast tangible remains from their heyday. Saltsburg, on the Kiskiminetas River, and Alexandria, on the Juniata River, were selected for study according to several criteria: for geographic location on flanking sides of the Allegheny Divide, for containing a building stock composed of a significant number of intact period buildings that date from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and for the existence of a group of standing structures specifically associated with the canal as well as the visibly extant canal bed itself. The individual buildings for which HABS reports were prepared were selected from previously conducted surveys of the municipalities based on construction date, architectural and historical merit, and retention of architectural integrity (ie., original form and exterior siding with minor additions).

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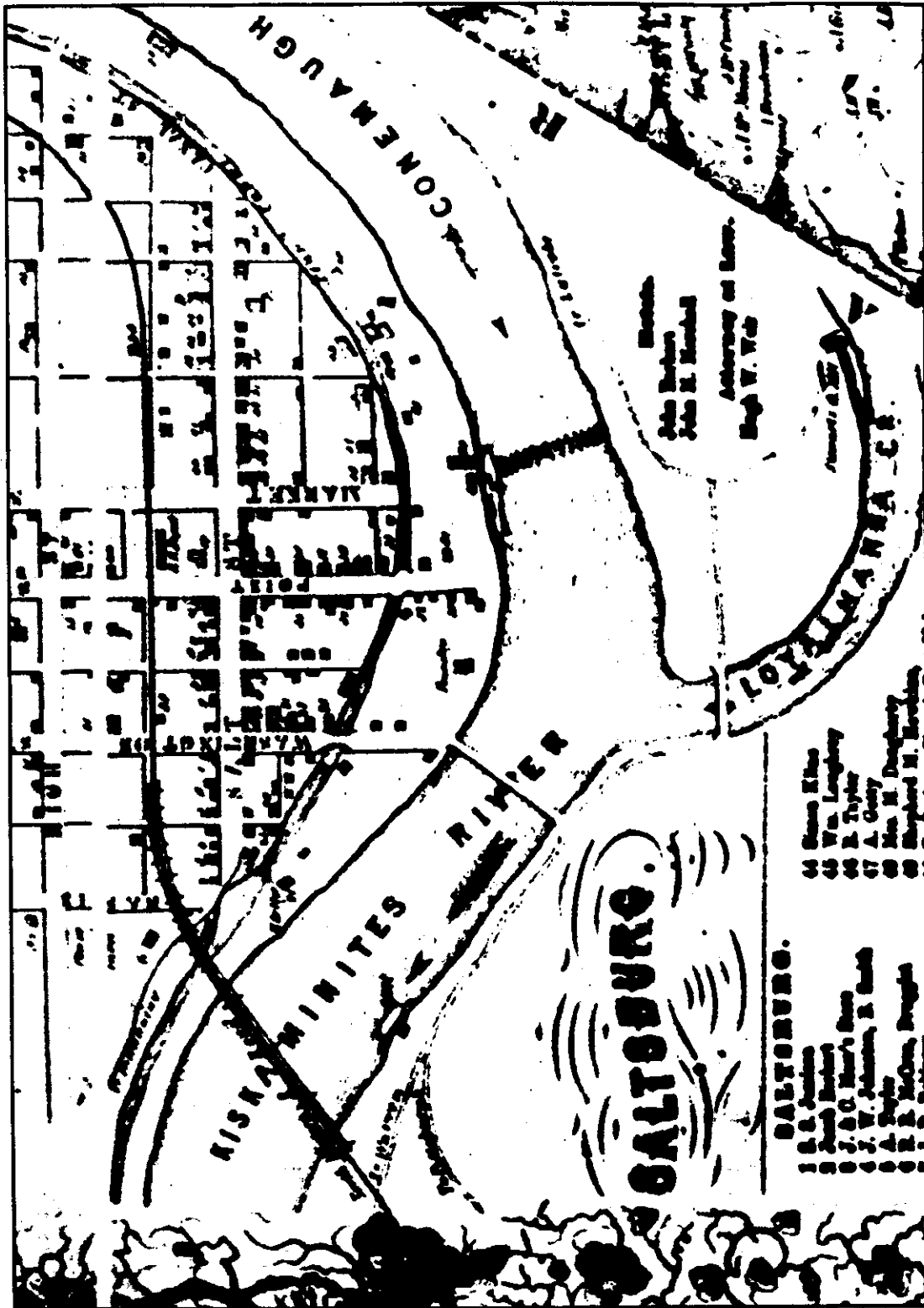


Figure 4.1. The Peelor Map of Saltsburg, 1856, showing the route of the Pennsylvania Canal along the Kiskiminetas and Conemaugh rivers, and north of it the railroad tracks that bend to cross the river.

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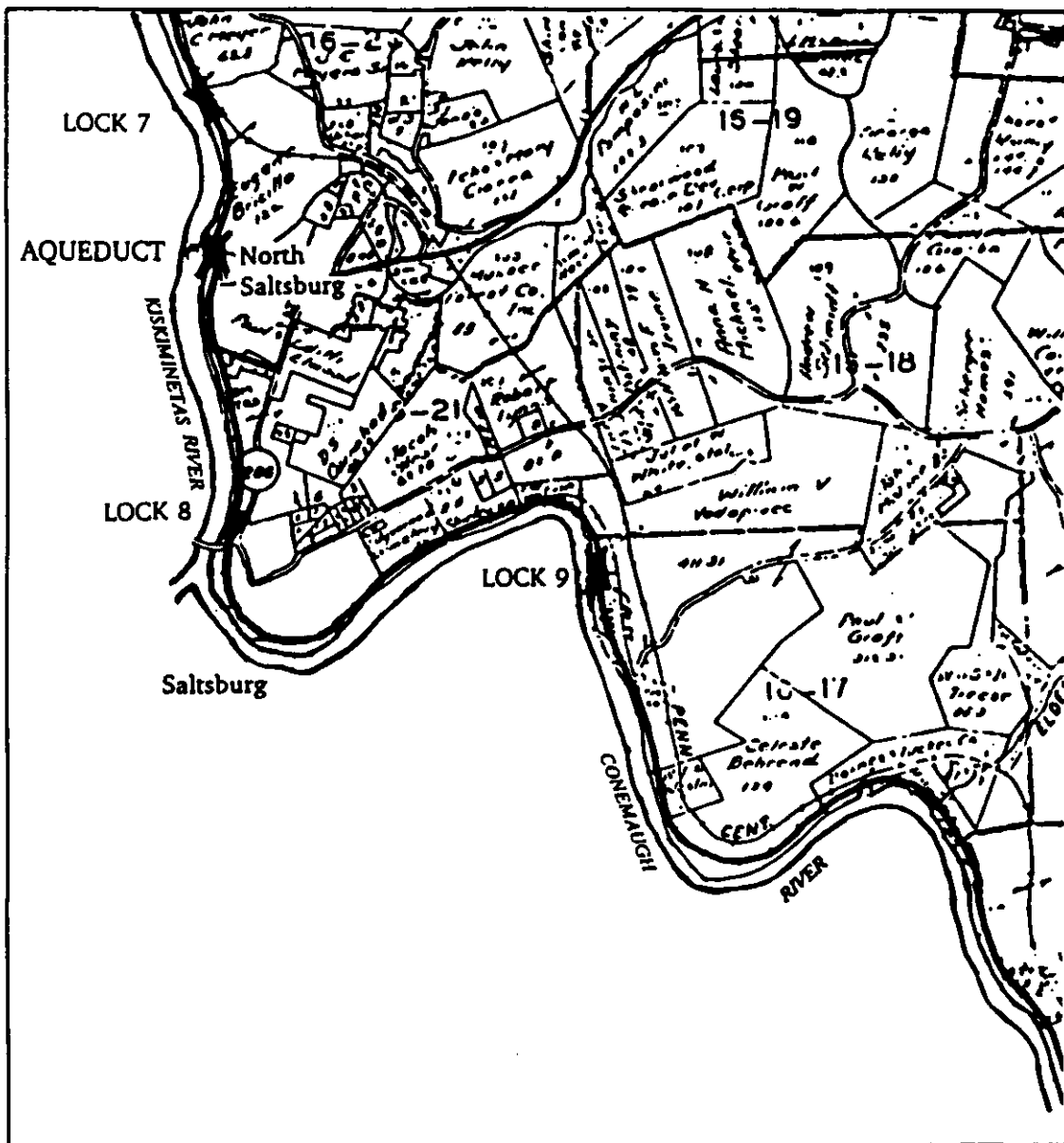


Figure 4.2. Site plan of Saltsburg depicting property lines and the nearby locks, No. 7, 8, and 9, and the aqueduct that carried the Pennsylvania Canal across Black Legs Creek.

6641

SALTSBURG: POPULATION FIGURES

Year	Population
1840	335
1850	623
1860	592
1870	659
1880	855
1890	900*/1,114
1897	1,000
1909	1,200
1927	2,000

* 1886 and 1891 Sanborn Maps show a population of 900.
Figures are taken from Wiley, 221, and Sanborn Maps 1886, 1891, 1897, 1909, 1927.

COAL AND SALT PRODUCED IN INDIANA COUNTY, PA.

Year	Tons of Coal	Bushels of Salt
1820	7,000	
1825	20,000	
1830	24,000	
1835	29,000	
1838*	31,000	(1840) 70,890
1845	19,000	(1842) 70,000
1849	15,000	
1857-67	5,000-6,000 annually	

* This was the peak year for production of coal and salt, after which quantities declined.
Figures taken from Stephenson, Early Salt Industry of the Conemaugh-Kiskiminnas Valley.

Figure 4.3. Population and coal/salt production statistics

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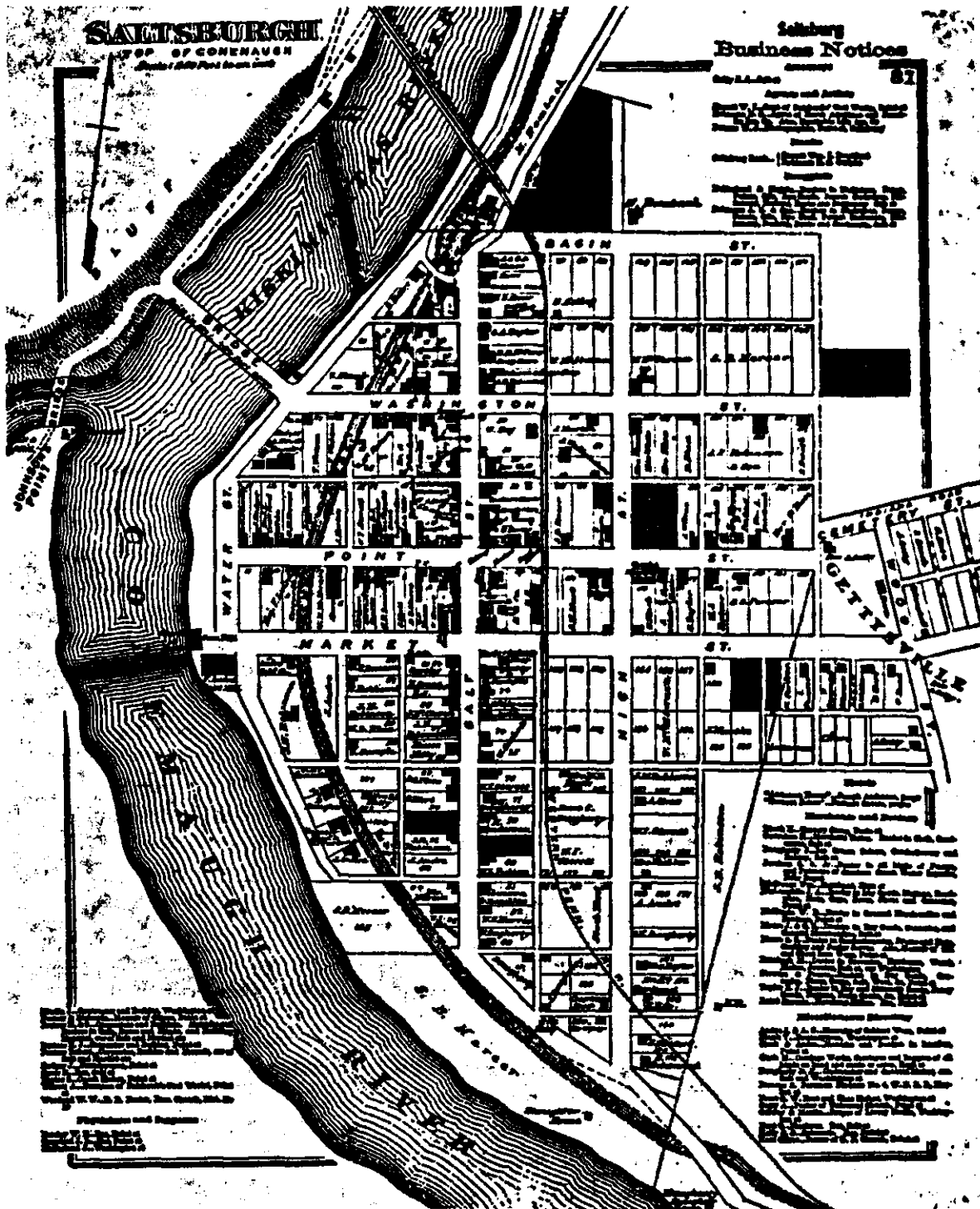


Figure 4.4. Atlas of Indiana County, Pennsylvania (Beers, 1880), showing Saltsburg, ca. 1871, with the "old Pennsylvania Canal" path and the operating Western Pennsylvania Railroad.